Glanvill, Joseph.

AN

ESSAY

CONCERNING

Preaching:

Written for the Direction

OF

A Young DIVINE;

AND

Useful also for the PEOPLE,
in order to Profitable Hearing.

by Joseph Glanvill A.M.

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TO

M. *Charles Fountain.*

SIR,

YOur *modesty in desiring some Direction in the great business you are about to undertake is very just, and well grounded: I wish I had as much reason to commend your judgment in the choise of a Director. There is nothing of greater moment than the work of a Preacher; and the due performance is proportionably difficult: And yet there is scarce any thing on which men run more rashly, and more easily persuade themselves they can judge of: Hence*

it is that not only the Perſons, who are deſign'd for that Office, in their young and unripe years, but even the vulgar of all ſorts, undertake to be Judges here: by reaſon of which immodeſty, the former ſo oft miſcarry when they addreſs themſelves to the Work, and the latter loſe much of the benefit of Sermons, in the vanity of their ignorant and bold cenſures. Of this I perceive by your Letter you have a juſt ſenſe, and therefore for your ſatisfaction, I have drawn together my thoughts, and obſervations, which I have ſet down familiarly, and plainly in the following papers. I deſign'd no elaborate Diſcourſe, nor Collections out of Books; but give you the reſults of my private conſiderations. Some learned men, I know, have written on the

ſubject

ſubject (tho not ſo many as one would think ſhould on an Argument of ſuch importance) But I purpoſely kept my ſelf from reading any others, that I might freely, without bias, give you mine own apprehenſions; which, as I interpret, was your deſire to me. Since the papers were written and tranſcribed, I have looked over two or three of the chief of thoſe Diſcourſes; and am exceedingly incouraged by finding, that my conceptions, as to the main, are not only conſiſtent, but very agreeable with theirs. I could have exemplified all the ways of bad Preaching I have caution'd againſt, in many, who have yet been applauded for their follies; but I deſign not to reflect upon perſons; 'tis ſufficient that I mark the Errors of Practice.

THE difference, and contrariety of mens judgements and opinions, is long ſince grown into a common ſaying, and become matter of every ones obſervation: But among all the ſubjects of various thoughts, there is ſcarce a greater diverſity, than in the judgments men make of *Preaching*; of which, beſides the variety of Phancies, and the ſeveral degrees of underſtanding, this is a principal cauſe, *viz.* That men judge of Sermons by very *different meaſures*; and every one expects that the Preacher ſhould conform to *his* particular Rule of judging. Some would have them to be polite,

and

and ingenious Diſcourſes, to *gratify* and *entertain* the Audience: ſo that if the words be not choſen, and the periods even, and the matter witty, and diverting, the Sermon is condemn'd for a flat, and dull Homily; and which is harder yet, if it do not chance to hit on that *ſort* of wit, and eloquence, with which the Hearer is taken; it ſhall undergo the Cenſure, though it be, in another way, very eloquent, and ingenious. But then, Styles and fine ſayings, are of little account with another ſort of Judges; They ſtill expect to be taught ſome new thing that they never heard before; They are for notions, and learned obſervations; and where theſe are

wanting, every thing elſe is dry, and unreliſhing: A third would have Quotations, and Sentences out of Fathers and Philoſophers; ſo that the Sermon is nothing worth, in their judgment, that is not fill'd with names of Authors, and abundance of Greek and Latin: Others again are by no means for the citations of *theſe* kinds, but delight in numerous Texts of Scripture (Chapter, and Verſe) quoted roundly, and fluently, upon every occaſion, or without any, in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon: *Such* a Preacher proves all he ſaith, (though there be not one word alledg'd to purpoſe) He ſhall have their company, and is the only man that deſerves the honour

nour of their applauſes: Some are for the taking phraſes, and paſſionate out-cryes; for loudneſs and vehemence, for action and imitation, and this, with them, is *powerful* Preaching, and *theſe* the *pretious* men: whereas others will ſcarce allow of any thing that pretends to move a paſſion; The Preacher muſt ſpeak in one key, and tenour of voice, and ſtand as unmoveable as a Statue: He muſt ſpeak as if he ſaid a Leſſon, and his Sermons were an exerciſe to be repeated before his Maſters. I could recite many more inſtances of the different meaſures by which men judge in this matter; But theſe are enough for my preſent purpoſe.

Now

Now while the Rules of judging are so numerous, and so opposite, the opinions of Sermons must needs be equally different: and there would be no great hurt in this diversity, if men would be modest in their Censures; if they would not despise, and vilifie not only the persons, whose way they do not like, but even the Doctrines, and Rules of life that are not deliver'd after their peculiar fashion: But since these are too commonly the effects of it, this variety is a great unhappiness, an occasion of many separations, and a great hindrance to edification, and the progress of the Gospel.

So that it would be a Fe-

licity,

licity, not only to the Clergy, but even to the People, that are to be inſtructed by them; were men brought to judge by one, and the right meaſure: For then the Preachers would not have the temptation of complying with the phancies of their hearers; Nor theſe the occaſion of quarrelling their Teachers, and vilifying their doctrine, becauſe it is not dreſs'd up according to their capricious humors, and uncertain imaginations.

Now the Rule whereby the people are to judge, ought alſo to be the meaſure by which the Divine ſhould preach; and the meaſure no doubt ought to be taken from the *End*: This one

thing

thing conſidered, would reduce the Rules of preaching to a narrower compaſs: and if men would but ask themſelves the queſtion, *What is the End of Sermons*; they would eaſily ſee the folly and extravagance of many of their meaſures.

The *End* of preaching muſt be acknowledg'd to be the *Inſtruction* of the hearers in *Faith* and *Good Life*, in order to the Glory of God, and their preſent, and future happineſs; and this ought to be the *Rule* and *Meaſure* of Preaching, and the exerciſe judg'd by this. When it is proper for the promoting theſe ends, it is good Preaching; when it is not ſo aim'd, though the Diſcourſe be never

ſo

ſo elaborate, witty, eloquent, or Learned, it is not *Preaching*. It may have its proper commendation as a Speech, but ought not to be reckon'd as a good Sermon.

Having thus briefly ſetled the general meaſure, I ſhall give you the main *Rules* of *Preaching*; and then point out the moſt notorious faults of Sermons, that are tranſgreſſions of them: I ſhall deſcribe alſo what I take to be the fit and decent circumſtances: and by what induſtries the faculty may be obtain'd.

I ſhall handle the *Rules* of Preaching under theſe four Heads. It ought to be **plain, practical, methodical, affectionate.**

1. **Plainels**

1. PLainness is a Character of great latitude, and ſtands in oppoſition, Firſt to *hard words*. Secondly, to *deep* and *myſterious notions*. Thirdly, to *affected Rhetorications*, and Fourthly, to *Phantaſtical Phraſes*.

1. The Preacher ſhould uſe *plain words*: ſo the end, *Edification*, requires He that affects hard ones, ſpeaks in an unknown tongue, and is a *Barbarian* to his Auditors; they hear the ſound, but are not edified: of all the vanities of Speech, there is none more contemptible than this: and none is more exploded among the wiſe; not only in preaching, but in all matters of ſolemn diſcourſe, and ordinary

ordinary converſation. It is commonly the Error of the Youth; and may be pardon'd to ſuch, in Moral, and Philoſophical ſubjects: but in *Men*, ſet apart to inſtruct the people in thing of ſpiritual, and eternal concernment, 'tis not be indured. If you here ask me, *What I mean by hard words?* I will preſume that you cannot think I intend to condemn all that are borrow'd from the *Greek*, *Latin*, or other more modern languages: No, the *Engliſh* is a mixt ſpeech, made up of divers tongues, and we cannot ſpeak without uſing forreign words: So that thoſe that talk of *pure Engliſh*, if they mean *unmixt*, by it, dream of Chimæra's: our

Language

Language hath in all Ages been inlarging by the Introduction of borrow'd words, which when they are once brought into common uſe, they may be ſpoken without blame of affectation: yea there is ſometimes vanity, and affectation in avoiding them: You know a great inſtance of this in a late Writer, who to ſhun the Latiniſms of *immenſity*, *eternity*, *penetr ability*, &c. uſeth theſe, *all-placeneſs*, *all-timeneſs*, *thorow-fareneſs*, and abundance ſuch like. This *Engliſh* is far more unintelligible, than that *Latin*, which cuſtom of ſpeech hath made eaſie, and familiar. I therefore blame not all forreign words, provided common uſage hath made them free

free of our language: and when we have no native ones that do as well expreſs what we would ſay: but to affect outlandiſh words that have not yet receiv'd the publick ſtamp, and eſpecially to do it, when the ordinary *Engliſh* will repreſent the thing as well; Theſe are the hard words I condemn, and this is a vanity I think extreamly reprehenſible in a Preacher. Beſides which, I note by way of further limitation, and for more clearneſs, that I blame not all words that are not underſtood by the meer vulgar: every Art, every Profeſſion, every Subject hath proper terms, which are of hard, and harſh ſound to thoſe that underſtand not

not those matters respectively; but are easie, and familiar to such as know them. And in Divinity there are frequent occasions of using reasons, and illustrations taken from the Philosophy, and nature of things; as particularly in the discourses concerning the *Being*, and *Attributes* of *God*, the *Immortality* of the *Soul*, and a future life; about *Enthusiasm*, and *Fanatical* pretences to the *Spirit*: These, and divers other main subjects of Religion, that are fit, and necessary to be spoken to, sometimes, especially among hearers of more advanced understandings, cannot be treated of without using words which the meer common sort cannot compre-

comprehend: and yet as long as they are ſuch, as are known, and frequently uſed, in thoſe ſubjects, 'twere humour and ignorance to interdict them. But then, I would caution here, that the Preacher ſhould not employ more terms of art than need: Yea he ſhould always avoid them, when they are not neceſſary; that is, when more generally known expreſſions will explain the thing as well. And this further I would adviſe, that you deal not much on ſuch arguments among common hearers: Theſe are ſtrong meat, babes muſt have milk, and ſimpler diet.

To this head of hard words, I may refer another vanity, which

which is an affected uſe of ſcraps of *Greek* and *Latin*, things of no Service to the vulgar, by whom they are not underſtood; and by the wiſe they are now generally deſpiſed. I ſuppoſe I need not caution you, in more words, againſt this antiquated pedantry, which is worn out every where, except in ſome remote, and dark corners, where mean ſpirits ſeek the admiration of the ignorant, by ſuch low, and little devices. Indeed in ſolemn aſſemblies of knowing and learn'd men, the Authority of the ancients may properly be cited in their own words, when they ſerve to confirm or illuſtrate ſome doubted truth; but to do it frequently in common

and

and vulgar matters, among ordinary hearers, is affected folly, that ſignifieth nothing, but the weakneſs, and vanity of him that doth it.

2. Preaching ſhould be plain, in oppoſition to deep and myſterious notions: We ſhould not trouble our pulpits with Hypotheſes of Philoſophy or the heights of ſpeculative Theology. The generality are not capable of much Theory: thoſe are matters fit for the ſchools of learning, and the thoughts of deep, conſidering men. Much miſchief is faln on Religion by reaſon of the tranſgreſſion of this Rule: myſterious, notional preaching hath put many conceited people upon medling with

with what they can never well understand, and so hath fill'd them with air, and vanity, and made them proud, phantastical, and troublesome; disobedient to their Governours, and contemptuous to their betters. True knowledge indeed humbleth; but the conceited image of it, knowledge *falsly so call'd*, puffeth up, and is an instrument of mischief.

3. Plainness may be opposed to affected Rhetorick, and in this sense too, Preaching should be plain: *Not in the inticing words of mans wisdome*, or *excellency of speech* (as the Apostle speaks) *viz.* not like the Orators, and Rhetoricians of those times, who coveted the glory of being accounted

accounted eloquent; and when they were praiſed, they had their reward: but our ends are far greater, and nobler, and ſo we ſhould ſpeak *not as pleaſing men, but God*; with that ſeriouſneſs and gravity as becomes thoſe that deſign to *perſuade men*, in the matters that relate to the glory of God, and their own preſent, and future well-being: for which purpoſes a manly unaffectedneſs, and ſimplicity of ſpeech is moſt proper. There is a baſtard kind of eloquence that is crept into the Pulpit, which conſiſts in affectations of wit and finery, flouriſhes, metaphors, and cadencies: This may be pardon'd to young men, in their firſt Eſſays

of Preaching, but is by no means to be uſed by an exerciſed and conſtant Preacher: for the meer common ſort heed not thoſe things, and the wiſe deſpiſe them; ſo that all the praiſe that is aim'd at is loſt, except it be among ſome phantaſtical, and unjudicious hearers; and on thoſe, they have uſually no other effect but that they entertain and tickle their phancies for the preſent, without making any impreſſion upon their minds, or affections: And this is a very low End for a Miniſter of God, who is to *beſeech men in Chriſt's ſtead.* If we would acquit our ſelves as ſuch, we muſt not debaſe our great, and important meſſage by thoſe vanities

ties of conceited ſpeech plainneſs is for ever the beſt eloquence; and 'tis the moſt forcible: ſo that our ſtudy ſhould be to repreſent what we have to deliver in proper, and eaſie expreſſions; neglecting and deſpiſing all ſtarchedneſs of ſet, and affected ſpeaking.

4. Plainneſs of preaching implies alſo the avoiding of phantaſtical phraſes. There are ſome that place the power, and ſpirituality of Preaching in theſe; and reckon that there is ſomething of extraordinary grace, and force in them: ſo that if a man repreſents the truths of the Goſpel in ſimplicity and plainneſs, that ſhall go for dull morality; but the ſame

things ſet off by conceited, faſhionable phraſes ſhall be moſt rare, and ſpiritual Divinity. Thus if you teach men to believe *Chriſt*'s Doctrines, to obey his Laws, to truſt to his promiſes, and to conform to his Example; theſe ſhall be counted dull, dry, and unedifying things, that no-ways affect, or move: but if you tell the people, that they muſt roll upon *Chriſt*, cloſe with *Chriſt*, get into *Chriſt*, get a ſaving intereſt in the Lord *Chriſt*: O this is ſavoury, this precious, this is ſpiritual teaching indeed; whereas if any thing more be meant by thoſe phraſes; than what the other plain expreſſions intend, it is either falſhood, or non-

non-ſenſe. If therefore you would be a taking popular Preacher, here is your way: but if you would (as I hope you deſign) be a ſolid and honeſt one, you muſt avoid ſuch odd, and fooliſh affectations. For by the uſe, and delight in ſuch, ignorant people are blown up into an apprehenſion of their extraordinary knowledge, and acquaintedneſs with the myſteries of the Goſpel, when as indeed they know nothing; and when they hear ſuch phraſes, they are pleaſed with their ſound, but have no meaning or knowledge of any thing conveyʼd by them, and though this be vulgarly accounted plain preaching; yet in truth it is

the moſt difficult; and for the moſt part neither teachers, nor hearers underſtand it.

Thus I have deſcribed to you the firſt Rule, and Character of Preaching, it ſhould be **Plain.**

2. IT ſhould be **Practical.**

The main buſineſs of Religion is a good and holy life; and our main deſign ſhould be to promote that; This is to be endeavour'd by *Pious Doctrines*, *Practicable Directions*, and *Forcible Motives.*

1. *Doctrines* and *Practice* are not oppoſite but ſubordinate. Action requires ſome knowledge; the Soul without it is not good. The foundation for good life muſt be laid in thoſe principles

ciples, that promote, direct and incourage it, which the people muſt be frequently and plainly taught: The Doctrines that are ſpeculative and nice ſhould be let alone; but thoſe that guide, and incourage us in virtue and goodneſs, muſt be often explain'd and enforc'd. And the Preacher ſhould chuſe ſuch for ſubjects, as are moſt ſutable to the Exigencies of the Age, and Place in which he lives. Now the Doctrines I think moſt ſeaſonable and proper for this, are ſuch as theſe; (*i.e.*) Explications and vindications of the *Attributes* of God, eſpecially of his *Goodneſs*. For nothing ſo much governs mens thoughts, and practices in Religion, as the

conceptions they have of the Divine Nature and Attributes: If they look on God as a rigid, ſevere Being, that acts altogether by meer power and arbitrary will, their Religion likely, will conſiſt in forced, heartleſs obſervances, which are properly Superſtition; but if they conceive Him as infinitely kind and gracious, acting by the principle, and for the ends of benignity, and goodneſs, this produceth holy love, and delight in God, which begets the moſt ſincere, and kindly devotion. Therefore 'tis very fit and neceſſary for us to endeavour to implant right conceptions of God, in the minds of men, and to deliver them from

thoſe

thoſe Doctrines that have miſre-ported him in the world, to the Eclipſe of his Glory, and the great prejudice of Souls. (2.) 'Tis very proper and ſea-ſonable for the Age to repreſent the *Reaſonableneſs* of *Religion*, both in the principles and duties of it; That men may know upon what grounds they ſtand, and not hold their faith by meer cuſtome, and the tradition of their Fathers: That they may be able to give an account of it to thoſe that ask them: that they may be the better faſtned in it, and not be blown up and down by every wind of doctrine: That they may be inabled to de-fend their Faith againſt gain-ſayers, and to ſecure themſelves

from the pretences and temptations of ſeducing ſpirits. (3.) The *neceſſity* of an *holy life* is a moſt proper ſubject for all times, and particularly for theſe, in which the Antinomians, and Solifidians on the one ſide, and the Romaniſts on the other, have prevail'd ſo far as to have it eſteem'd in a manner needleſs; For the *firſt* place all the intereſt of Religion in an empty, notional Faith, preſcinding from good works, and real inward righteouſneſs: and the *others* have ſuch ſalvo's and grounds of ſecurity for evil men by means of Indulgences, Penances, Purgatory, and the like, that the abſolute neceſſity of thorow Repentance, and Reformation of

of life is much weakned, if not quite taken away by them. So that 'tis extreamly needful for us to endeavour to ſecure our people againſt the dangerous errors of both ſorts: and to fix them upon the neceſſity of living well, in order to the obtaining the favour of God, and the Salvation of their Souls: for if any thing elſe will render them accepted of him, and make their condition ſafe in the other world, all our exhortations to holineſs, and good life, will be to little purpoſe. (4.) *Catholick, Univerſal Charity* is a Doctrine exceedingly fit for theſe times, in which diviſions, and mutual animoſities have produced ſo many fatal, and deplorable

effects

effects. Peace and Love, ſhould be ſome of the objects of our chief care, ſtudy, and indeavours, knowing that no Religion can thrive without them; we ſhould ſeek the peaceable principles, and walk in the charitable ways; teaching and preſſing both upon our people, in the full latitude, and extent of them: And though the doing this will diſpleaſe, and provoke the Bigots, and Boutefeu's of all ſides, yet we muſt go on, arm'd with the courage, and patience of the Goſpel, and tell dividers their duty, and their ſins, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: and be inſtant in preaching of peace, and love, though we are torn in pieces

pieces for it. I do but juſt hint theſe things; and 'tis not proper to do more in this place. They are principal heads fit to be made ſome of the chief hinges of your diſcourſes, and ſcope of your endeavours.

2. Your Doctrines muſt be attended with *Rules* of *Life*: for if you teach nothing but doctrinal matters, though they are never ſo important, all will end in notion, and ſpeculation; The directing men to the knowledge of their duties, and the way to perform them, as they ought, is one of the greateſt parts of our work. In doing which, you muſt take care, that you make not more ſins, and duties than God hath made: that you preſs them

them not upon things that have no warrant from Scripture, Reaſon, the injunction of our Superiors, or practice of the firſt Chriſtians: That you require not ſmall matters with the ſame zeal, and concernment, that you do the greateſt, and moſt indiſpenſible virtues: That you urge not men to unattainable heights, or things beyond the ſize of humane nature, in this low condition: but preach the main, known, acknowledg'd duties; and ſuch, as are ſuited to the plain precepts of the Goſpel, and the condition, and poſſibilities of human life; to the performance of which you ſhould direct by the few, proper, practicable Rules;

Rules; not confounding your hearers by multitudes, which do but puzzle, and diſcourage; but adviſe ſuch as are moſt fit, and moſt direct; ſuch, as are not only to be talked of, but may be practiſed, and brought into action. And theſe duties, and theſe Rules you ſhould enforce.

3. By the moſt *powerful motives*, taken from the reaſonableneſs, and neceſſity of them: from hope and fear, the conſiderations of the preſent world, and of the next: convincing mens underſtandings that their intereſt is in their duty, and by this way endeavouring to influence their reſolutions, and their practice, ſuch is the practical

cal preaching I adviſe. The next general Rule is,

3. *Preaching* ſhould be **Methodical.** Method is neceſſary both for the underſtandings, and memories of the hearers; when a diſcourſe hath an order, and connexion, one part gives light to another; whereas the mind is loſt in confuſions. And how helpful Method is to the memory, is obvious to every one to conceive. Now for the adviſing the particular method, I muſt ſay, that no one is always beſt, but it muſt be varied as the ſubject is: For general Rules you may govern your ſelf by theſe.

1. You

1. You ſhould take care your method be *natural*; not ſtrain'd and forced, but ſuch as the matter, and the capacities, and wants of the auditors, require, and lead you to. 2. It ſhould be *obvious*, and plainly laid down: If the method be dark and hidden, it loſeth its end, and neither helps the underſtanding, nor the memory. What ſome ſay here, that it ſhould be Cryptick to ſurpriſe the Auditors, ſeems to me very vain, and weak; for our buſineſs is not to ſurpriſe, but to inſtruct; not to take the phancy with the unexpectedneſs, and ſtrangeneſs of what we ſay; but to inlighten the mind, and to ingage, and incourage the practice,

ctice, by the clearneſs, and ſuitableneſs of our preaching, and for this I am ſure, an open, and known Method is beſt; for when 'tis ſuch, the hearers know where we are, and their thoughts can go along with us; whereas in the other way, they loſe us quickly, and our words dye in their ears without effect, or laſting impreſſion. 3. I adviſe that it abound not with too many particulars; the main things to be ſaid may be reduced to a ſmall number of heads, which being thorowly ſpoken to, will ſignifie more than a multitude ſlightly touch'd. And when the matter is ſpun out into many particulars, uſually they are coincident, being only different

ferent words for the ſame thing, and ſo they diſcover the little judgment of the ſpeaker, and confound the memories of the hearers. Theſe Rules I think you may do well to obſerve. But I ſhall be a little more particular; and conſider in method. Firſt, The choice of the *Text*. Secondly, The *Preface*. Thirdly, The *Body* of the Sermon. And Fourthly, the *Application*.

1. In chooſing your *Text* you ſhould take care that you diſcover not any conceitedneſs, or lightneſs of phancy; for that is one way of abuſing the Word of God; which ſhould never be plaid, or trifled with; but always mention'd with ſeriouſneſs,

neſs, and gravity, eſpecially upon all occaſions of ſolemn diſcourſe from it. 2. You ſhould avoid the ordinary choiſe of abſtruſe, difficult, and myſterious Scriptures, which ſome affect on purpoſe to oſtentate their skill and learning, and more than ordinary ſpirituality of knowledge. There is no ſubject fit for a Sermon, but there are plain places that will afford occaſion to treat of it: and the conſequence from thence is moſt eaſie and moſt forcible. 3. For the ſame reaſon you ſhould not affect very barren Texts: There is alſo vanity in this, for men think by ſo doing, to raiſe the reputation of their wit, and invention, in finding out

out profitable matter, in ſuch places, as ſeem'd to have little or nothing in them: when as to the wiſe they ſhew nothing but their conceitedneſs, and affectation; and put a force upon the words, extorting that from them, which they never intended; which alſo is a kind of fooling with, and abuſe of Scripture.

2. For the *Preface* of your Sermon. Firſt, The Introduction ſhould not be remote, or far fetcht, but ſuch as ſhews the neceſſity, or ſeaſonableneſs of the ſubject you have choſen; or ſomthing that leads to the underſtanding of it. 2. The ſcope, occaſion, and coherence of the words ſhould be laid down plainly

and

and in few words: long coherences from Chapter to Chapter, and Verſe to Verſe, are moſt commonly arbitrary, and *made* by him that *finds* them; and always tedious, and of little advantage to the hearers. Thirdly, The explication ſhould be ſhort, giving the ſence without phraſes, and terms of Art: nice and elaborate criticiſms, and expoſitions are for the moſt part unprofitable; and they are loſt upon common Auditors. More vain are the recitals of the different opinions of Expoſitors, and Commentators among ſuch, and when they hear that learned men are of ſo many, and of ſuch diſagreeing judgments about the ſenſe of

every Scripture, they are apt to conclude, either that learning is vain, or what is worſe, that Religion is uncertain. So that the repreſentation of ſuch diverſity tends to the diſſettlement of the people; and it begets in ſome a deſpair of underſtanding any thing of the Bible, which commonly ends in Scepticiſm, or Popery. Beſides which, you may conſider whether it hath not the appearance of ſome inſolence and vanity in the Preacher, to tell the people that ſuch and ſuch great, and celebrated men underſtood the words in this ſenſe, and in that; and then to add, *But my opinion is thus*; which muſt ſtand as the deciſive judgment.

3. The

3. The *main Diſcourſe* you may handle either by dividing the Text into its ſubſtantial *parts*; or by reſolving them into one, or more main *propoſitions*. In the **firſt**, you muſt take care that your diviſions be not numerous, minute, and nice, remembring that *Diviſionum minutiis rerum franguntur pondera*: of all the vanities in Preaching there is none leſs accountable than this, of dividing Texts into indiviſibles; and mincing them into ſingle words; which makes them ſignifie nothing: This is a trick by which men wander whither they will, forſake the ſenſe of their texts, and run uſually into contemptible impertinencies, and childiſhneſs of trifling. Diviſions

viſions alſo that are very curious, and ſcholaſtical are to be avoided, as things not intended by the inſpired writers, (who ſpoke with plainneſs, and ſimplicity;) nor any ways promoting the edification of the hearers. But your diviſions ſhould be into ſolid and main parts, obvious in the Text, and apt to yield occaſion for ſerious, and ſubſtantial diſcourſe. Secondly, when you handle your Text by way of **propoſition** or **doctrine**, care muſt be taken that what you infer for a ſubject, be naturally contain'd in the words, and not violently inforced upon them: and the propoſitions you undertake ſhould be few; one ordinarily

is enough, two or three ſometimes may be allow'd; but more ſcarce to be indured, in a ſingle Sermon, wherein time will not give leave to do any tolerable right to them. Thirdly, the next thing to be done is to **ſtate** the **notion** of the truth, or duty you ſpeak of. This is exceeding neceſſary in order to the forming clear, and diſtinct conceptions in the minds of the hearers; for ſo much any man knows, as he diſtinctly underſtands, and no more: and this is generally much wanted, for men have but confuſed imaginations about the doctrines, and duties of Religion, like the ſight of him that ſaw men walking like Trees;

Trees; their thoughts about theſe, are like their dreams, having nothing in them diſtinct, or clear. Hence it is that they underſtand ſo little of Religion, and reaſon ſo fooliſhly, and injudiciouſly about it. It is therefore needful to ſtate the doctrine, or duty we ſpeak of clearly, and diſtinctly, bringing it the neareſt way to the underſtanding, without ambages, and terms of Art, and impertinent diſtinctions; Truth may be taught plainly without theſe, by any one that underſtands it well himſelf. Fourthly, your **proofs** are ordinarily, from *Scripture* and *Reaſon*; Firſt, Proofs from Scripture in things generally acknowledg'd, are needleſs;

eſpecially when the Bible is every where full of the truth we aſſert, and the Text contains it in ſo many words; to labour in this kind of proof is proving one Scripture by another, and doing little to purpoſe. When the matter is not ſo clear, or ſo confeſt, this ſort of proof is ſeaſonable, and needful, but then we ſhould not do it only by numbers, but by weight of Texts. Few places that are ſtrong, and to the matter import more than never ſo many that are not pertinent. Therefore you ſhould not prove by your Concordance but by your underſtanding, and judgment. not by the ſound of words, but by the ſenſe of things. And you

are

are to look upon it as an abuſe of Scripture, to heap Texts to no purpoſe. 2. Your proofs from *Reaſon* ſhould be from acknowledg'd principles of mankind, not from preſumptions, or cuſtomary belief, or the doubtful opinions of this, or that Philoſopher. Thoſe we may uſe in evincing the moſt known truths, and duties of Chriſtianity, both to confirm our ſelves and others in the reaſonableneſs of our Religion, and to convince thoſe Gainſayers that have worn off all reverence for the ſacred writings.

4. In Applications there are two extreams, *viz.* tedious Prolixity, and too much conciſeneſs, and Brevity; in the former

mer error are thoſe, who run their Applications into numerous, coincident *Uſes*, as of *Information*, *Confutation*, *Inſtruction*, *Reproof*, *Exhortation*, *Dehortation*, *Comfort*, *Direction* and the like; all which, are reducible to *Inference*, *Advice* and *Motives*. The *Inference* contains the general truths that ariſe from the diſcourſe: the *Advice*, thoſe exhortations, and directions that concern the practice: and the *Motives* afford thoſe conſiderations whereby the duties are inforc'd, and our indeavours are incouraged and excited.

You may inſiſt more or leſs on theſe, as the ſubject may require, only take care, you do not tire the Auditors by bring-

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ing in all things, that are any way reducible to these uses, but insist on such as are most proper, and immediate.

The other extream to be avoided, is too much Brevity in the Application, which being the directing and inforcing part, the life of a Sermon lies here. So that the hudling up of this most material part in a few cold words, betrays as much want of Zeal, as extream tediousness doth of Judgment.

THE *Fourth* Character of Preaching I mention'd is, That it should be **Affectionate.** The work is the greatest, and the concernment of it, to our selves, and to our hear-

ers, infinite; ſo that it requires the flower and the vigour of our affections, and endeavours: and for us to be cold, and heartleſs, in declaring things of ſo vaſt a moment, ſuggeſts that we believe not what we ſay: and it cannot be expected, that others ſhould be much mov'd by the preaching, when the Preacher himſelf ſeems unconcern'd. Religion is Zeal, and if men are not earneſt in it, if it hath not the warmth of their affections, and the ardours of their deſire, and love, it hath no conſiderable hold upon them. Theſe we muſt endeavour to excite; they are the ſprings of the Soul, that move the Will, and put our powers into Action.

Now

Now the beſt, and moſt laſting affections, are ſuch as are raiſed by the underſtanding, and the knowledg of our duties, and our intereſt: So that we ſhould repreſent the influencing truths of the Goſpel, in plainneſs, and power, to beget due, and deep conviction in the mind. But generally 'tis only the wiſeſt ſort whoſe affections are ſtir'd in this nobleſt, and moſt regular way: The common people, are incapable of much Theory; they have not Souls for much knowledge, nor uſually are they moved by this method; It will be hard for you to make them heed Doctrines, though they are never ſo worthy, or important: their affections are

raiſed by figures, and earneſtneſs and paſſionate repreſentations; by the circumſtances of the voice, and geſture, and motion; ſo that however little you may think theſe, they muſt be heeded, and ſuited to the capacity, and genius of your hearers. God himſelf doth ſo condeſcend; he ſpeaks in our Language, and in ſuch ſchemes of ſpeech as are apt to excite the affections of the moſt vulgar, and illiterate. St. *Paul* became all things to all. He became weak unto the weak, as well as ſtrong to the ſtrong: milk muſt be given, as well as ſtrong meat. There are indeed a ſort of conceited weak that are not mov'd but by vain phancies and ſenceleſs

leſs phraſes, and unintelligible notions, by a rude loudneſs and apiſh geſtures and boiſterous violence; and who are ſo qualified are the precious Soul-ſaving men, the teachers they heap up to themſelves: To ſuch humors, and follies as theſe, we may not accommodate; for this is a debaſing the Goſpel; 'tis the putting Religion into a fools coat, and an expoſing of it to the contempt of men of underſtanding, and judgment: If peoples palates are ſo deprav'd that they like nothing but chalk, and lime, and muſhrooms, we muſt do them all the good we can, but not be concern'd to pleaſe them in their own way. God muſt be pleaſed, and not men

men, he hath no *delight in fools*; nor can he approve of apiſhneſs, and childiſh folly. Let the end be what it will, we ought to feed our people with wholſome food, and not with traſh, and poyſon, though they long never ſo much for them: But this we ought to indeavour, *viz.* to give our matter its proper colours, to ſhew it in that light which may convey it with moſt advantage into the hearers hearts, and affections; to ſtudy all the warrantable ways by which men uſe to be awakened, and excited; and to preſs the truths, and duties we teach, with a zeal, and warmth proportionable to the concernment of them; taking care to avoid all

indecency, and extravagance. Thus of the general Characters of Preaching.

NOW by what hath been diſcourſed divers faults in Preaching are reprehended, ſome of which I ſhall more particularly note, under the following heads.

1. There is a certain ſtiffneſs in the compoſition of many Sermons, in the which words are ſet, and periods meaſur'd, and cadences turned, all which argue a vain endeavour to entertain, and pleaſe conceited hearers, without deſign either to inform the judgment, to ingage the will, or to ſtir up any devout affections. This way is painful, but

but the effects of it are harſh, and forced, and unnatural; that poſſibly may obtain praiſe from ſome ill Judges, that have no meaſure either of good preaching, or of right ſpeech, when as they do no manner of good, but expoſe the Preacher to the diſeſteem of the Pious and Judicious. What is eaſie and natural is always beſt, and moſt operative: and things ſo great, and ſo powerful as the matters of Religion are in themſelves, have no need of more than a genuine and proper repreſentation; yea they are debaſed and hinder'd in their operation by the formality of Elaborate Language.

This is like *faſhions* that will not

not laſt, the modes of it vary continually; and what is rare Language in one time, is fooliſh and ridiculous in another: But what is natural and proper, laſts always; 'tis reliſh'd by all judgments, and approv'd in all times.

There is another ſort of ſet Preachers that are ſo by defect of parts, they perform nothing but with great adoe, and pumping; and after all, their ſence is mean, and their words lye croſs, and untoward, though very much affected, and brought together with pain. 'Tis not poſſible for a man of a clear mind and juſt ſence to ſpeak ſo bad upon the ſuddain, as they always do upon the moſt anxious ſtudy:

ſtudy: There is no need to adviſe you to indeavour againſt this defect; thoſe that labour under it might find remedy by ſtudying to have a thorow comprehenſion of all the preachable heads of Theology, and due converſe with the fluent and eaſie writers.

You do not underſtand me, I ſuppoſe, in all this, as if I was againſt mens ſtudy, and care about the choiſe, and order of their words in Preaching, there is much need of this, and the ſucceſs depends much upon it: but then the thoughts and labour, ſhould be to get ſuch as may moſt fully and plainly repreſent our meaning, and convey it into the mind with moſt advan-

advantage; ſo that the care of words ought to be to ſpeak with the moſt natural eaſineſs, and freedom; which (as I noted before) is the trueſt eloquence, doth moſt good, and generally affects moſt.

2. Some Sermons loſe their efficacy and force by being too full, and cloſe. Fullneſs of ſence, and compactneſs of writing are real excellencies, and ſuch as fall to few mens ſhare: they are very proper, and taking in diſcourſes, to the wiſe eſpecially, in matters of Theory and Speculation: But the hearers of Sermons are mixt people, among whom uſually there are very few of ſo much ſagacity and attention, as to be able

able to comprehend, and to go along with a judicious, exactly penn'd Diſcourſe: Whoever would edifie *them*, muſt dilate, and repreſent the ſame things in different lights and colours; There is a certain laxneſs of ſtyle that is neceſſary for them: for that will enter the mind and move the affections in one way, that will not in another. And indeed it is painful to *men* of *parts*, to keep their thoughts even with the current of a full, and cloſe Sermon; the judgment and underſtanding even of ingenious and judicious Auditors cannot go ſo faſt as the tongue of the ſpeaker; and therefore a competent diffuſeneſs of ſtyle is acceptable to them

them alſo. Hence it is that men of fame for Preaching generally ſucceed worſt upon the moſt ſolemn occaſions, for which they have labour'd moſt. We do not love to have our minds kept ſtill upon the ſtretch, and to be over-power'd with fulneſs. You know what M. *Cowley* ſaith of Wit in Poetry,

Rather than all be Wit let none be there.

I will not go ſo far in this ſubject, but certainly there may be too much here: You have obſerv'd to me how little the ſtrongeſt, and acuteſt Univerſity Sermons edifie in ordinary Congregations; this I take to be a main reaſon of it. Indeed upon ſome occaſions, in a few Audito-

Auditories, a man may ſtudy conciſeneſs; but he ought not to take it for a meaſure of preaching: as the people will not indure this, ſo no preacher can hold it. There is I confeſs a looſneſs in ſpeaking that is very nauſeous and offenſive to the judicious, when men dwell upon the ſame things, and have little, or no ſence in a multitude of words; this is the extream on the other hand, and it ariſeth from want of judgment and invention.

3. Another fault I have obſerv'd in ſome Sermons is *deformity*: heights, and falls; eloquence, and ſordidneſs; wit, and no ſence; this is the fault of Collectors, that make noſegays,

gays, and pick a piece out of one Author, and a piece out of another; ſo that the whole is a medly of different things ill mingled. To avoid this you muſt be maſter of a fullneſs of ſence, that is your own; and when you make uſe of any notions you meet with in your reading, you ſhould form them according to your own way of expreſſing, and not tye your ſelf to the words of the Author: They ſhould be digeſted into your ſtore of thoughts, as the various juyce of flowers is by the induſtrious Bee; and ſo made uniform and agreeable; I mean not the uniformity of homogenious, but of organical bodies, in which all the parts, though

though of different nature, have a proportion, and conſpire to make up the beauty and uſefulneſs of the whole. The doctrines that are for information of maturer judgments, ſhould be expreſſed with a ſtrength in the ſtyle, ſuitable to the height of the matter; and ſuch as are for the directing and exciting the meer populace, with an eaſe, and familiarity that is proportioned to the ſubject, and capacities of ſuch hearers.

4. There is a ſort of *witticizing* which ſome uſe in Preaching, that by all means is to be avoided; the ſubjects of Sermons are grave and moſt ſerious, and ought to be ſuitably handled; we are to ſpeak as the *Oracles of God*

God, and as becomes his *Meſſen-*
gers, and *Ambaſſadors*; and how
abſurd would it be for perſons
of that Character from Tempo-
ral Princes, to deliver their
meſſage in juggles and quibbles,
in witticiſms, and flouriſhes.
How much more is it ſo in thoſe
that ſpeak from the King of
Heaven, in the moſt important
concerns of the ſouls of men:
This is fooliſhneſs of Preaching
indeed; 'tis not ſpeaking in
mans wiſdom, but in childrens
folly: a way of trifling that is
deſpicable in all ſubjects, much
more in ſuch: It is a propha-
nation of holy things, and
mockery upon Religion. And
'twere to be wiſhed that the
Governors of the Church would
chaſtiſe

chaſtiſe ſuch Foplins. This wit is more reprehenſible than the directeſt non-ſence; for this is Weakneſs, that is Affectation. Fools by nature are to be pittied, but theſe artificial ones deſerve ſcorn, and ſevere puniſhment. I cannot forbear ſpeaking thus warmly upon this occaſion. It would move any mans indignation that hath any ſence of Religion, to ſee men play with it at this rate. And to hear ſuch whifflers applauded, (as ſometimes it happens) for brave Preachers, would turn any man's ſtomach, that hath any grain of underſtanding: It is as if childiſh Declaimers ſhould be cryed up for mighty Oratours; and Morris-dancers for the moſt accompliſh'd

pliſh'd of mankind. Theſe are quite beſides the buſineſs of Preaching, they deſign to gratifie the vain and wanton palates, which ought to be reprov'd. They feed with muſhrooms, and haugusts, and empty diſhes, ſet out with flowers, or rather with weeds and nettles.

I do not by this reprehend all Wit whatſoever in Preaching, nor any thing that is truly ſuch: For true Wit is a perfection in our faculties, chiefly in the underſtanding, and imagination; Wit in the underſtanding is a ſagacity to find out the nature, relations, and conſequences of things; Wit in the imagination, is a quickneſs in

the phancy to give things proper Images; now the more of these is in Sermons, the more of judgment and ſpirit, and life: and without Wit of theſe kinds Preaching is dull, and unedifying. The Preacher ſhould indeavour to ſpeak ſharp, and quick thoughts, and to ſet them out in lively colours; this is proper, grave, and manly wit, but the other, that which conſiſts in inverſions of ſentences, and playing with words, and the like, is vile and contemptible fooling.

I have this to advertiſe more under this head, that even the Wit that is true, that may be uſed, and ought to be endeavour'd, ſhould not be hunted after

after out of the road. A man in a journey will not run over hedges to gather flowers; and the Preacher is much to blame that forſakes the direct courſe of his matter to fetch in notions, and elegancies; ſuch as are grave, and pertinent, and lie in his way he may uſe, but to ſet his phancy a ranging, and beating abroad after them, is folly, and affectation.

But Fifthly, There is a vice in Preaching quite oppoſite to this, and that is a certain road-dulneſs, and want of wit. There are a ſort of Preachers that ſay nothing but what is obvious to every vulgar conceit; nothing but what they take up from common talk; that ſpeak no

thoughts; have no vivacity in matter or ſtyle; who teach you nothing, excite you not at all; whatever they deliver is ſlight, ſuperficial, and unthought. This flatneſs ſhews want of underſtanding, want of Divinity, or want of conſideration of Religious matters. The way to avoid it is for the Preacher to form clear, diſtinct conceptions of all the heads of Theology (Doctrines and Duties) to think them well into his own mind, to digeſt and make himſelf maſter of them; not to content himſelf with the learning of memory, and the ſayings of Authors, but by deep and pregnant meditation to form his conceptions, to conſider things, and

to

to make obſervations upon the paſſions and actions of men; to do this will require Philoſophy; and without it a man cannot define, cannot diſtribute conceptions into their right places, cannot ſpeak intelligently, and into the bottom of things: and for want of this it is, that there is ſo much heavineſs and weakneſs in ſome mens Preaching: But of this I may have an occaſion to ſpeak further in what is to follow.

6. Another fault to be noted, is a deſultory ſort of skipping from one thing to another, without following any thing home. The Sermons of ſome conſiſt altogether in little remarks, and pretty notes, and ſtrain'd obſer-

vations. Theſe propoſe no main buſineſs to purſue, but touch abundance of things ſuperficially and ſlightly: ſo that no body is taught, none edified: when the Sermon is done, 'tis loſt, and no one almoſt can tell what it was about. The contrary way to this is to be choſen, which is always to propoſe ſome chief deſign, and to purſue that fully in the doctrinal and practical parts of it, at leaſt ſo far as it is neceſſary for the needs of the hearers. This you ſhould endeavour always; *viz.* to do right to the ſubject you undertake, that the people may (if they pleaſe) underſtand it better, and have before their Eyes the proper motives and

directions

directions to practiſe according to it.

7. I obſerve in ſome mens Preaching a certain ſordidneſs, which though ignorant people may like as plain, and familiar Preaching; yet 'tis ſuch a familiarity as begets contempt. Such is the uſe of vulgar Proverbs, and homely ſimilitudes, and rude and clowniſh phraſes: Theſe are indecencies of ſpeech, and misbecoming the reverence that is due to ſolemn diſcourſes and ſacred ſubjects; and thoſe who can be guilty of them have a certain clowniſhneſs of Soul, that hath no taſte of what is decorous and becoming. Such grate, and ſhock all men of ingenious ſence, and they cannot

hear ſuch ſtuff without ſhrinking and bluſhing for the Preacher. Plainneſs is the beſt Character of Speech, eſpecially in a Sermon, but not that which is Bluntneſs; this degenerates into ſordidneſs, and ruſticity.

Having thus treated of the matter and ſtyle of Sermons, I ſhall next ſpeak of the main circumſtances of Preaching, which concern the *Voice* and the *Action*.

1. The *Voice* ſhould be lively and earneſt; but without any ſet, or affected tone. It ſhould vary as the matter doth, and may have its riſings, and falls, if you take care to ſhun the extreams of exceſſive loudneſs in

neſs

ſome periods, and as unfit lowneſs in others: You ſhould avoid a droning dulneſs of ſpeech on the one hand, which ſhews unconcernment, and want of zeal; and a boiſterous noiſe on the other, which argues rudeneſs, and want of modeſty, and manners.

2. As to the circumſtance of *Action*, there are two extreams about it. Some are mimical, phantaſtical, and violent in their motions; this is rude and irreverent: others in oppoſition ſtand like images, and Preach without any motion at all; this is ſtupid and unnatural. When a man ſpeaks about things of conſequence, is concern'd himſelf, and would have others be

ſo, he cannot (without great violence) but uſe ſome proportioned action. God hath made us ſo that we muſt expreſs our inward reſentments by outward agitations; and the motion is allowed, and much ſet by, by all the maſters of Eloquence; it is neceſſary to the grace of ſpeaking, and hath a conſiderable ſhare in the influence on the hearers, who are moved by the Eye as well as by the Ear. So that motionleſs ſpeaking is ſenſeleſs, and unnatural. It was never taken upon any grounds of reaſon, but from the reſtraint of Notes, or an humor of oppoſition of the other extream; and is as bad a one it ſelf. Some motion is requiſite,

requiſite, the care muſt be to govern it ſo that it may be grave and decent; not a violent agitation, and diſtortion of the whole body; but a ſutable and moderate motion, as the matter ſhall require; and ſuch as is free and natural, without conſtraint, or affectation.

IF you now enquire what way is to be taken for the acquiſition of the faculty of ready Preaching. I ſhall give you my opinion in ſome advices; premiſing to them, that I ſuppoſe the knowledg of Philoſophy, Languages, Hiſtory, and a competent Acquaintance with the moſt ſubſtantial writings of the Ancient and Modern Divines.

vines. In all these I know you are well instructed, and have a due sence and relish of Religion upon your own Soul, which is the chief preparation: After which,

(1.) You should indeavour to settle in your mind the genuine Notion of all the Doctrines and Duties of Religion, not contenting your self with general and wandring conceptions, or such as you find in your memory, from the Books you have read, but enter into close meditation on each head, and lodge things clearly and distinctly in your thoughts, and by that means make them your own. If you are thus master of your sense, you will thereby be

be enabled to ſpeak readily and diſtinctly upon all occaſions; for want of expreſſion, and clearneſs in ſpeaking ariſeth generally, from defect of meditation, and clear thinking.

(2.) Be much in the reading, and ſtudy of the Scriptures; this will furniſh you with matter for Proof, for Direction, and for Inforcement; it will give your ſtyle a tincture that will render it more acceptable to the Pious, and more forcible upon all: and therefore by all means collect and digeſt in your mind, the Texts that are proper for every Doctrine, and for every Duty; and keep a conſtant repoſitory of them in your memo-

ry,

ry; that they may be always at hand,

(3.) Converſe with the writings of the practical, preſſing, awakening Divines; thoſe that ſpeak moſt naturally and lively, and moſt to the Souls of men: This will inſenſibly lead you to, and beget in you that beſt ſort of Pulpit-Eloquence.

(4.) In your firſt beginnings write Sermons well ſtudyed, well conſider'd, upon every Preachable Head: Go over the whole Body of Theology in that courſe, fill up each ſubject with a juſt Diſcourſe; ſaying all the proper material things you can upon each Argument. And then,

(5.) Make your ſelf perfect Maſter

Maſter of your Sermons, get them fully into your memory, and indeavour to keep them there: This is indeed painful, but 'tis a labour that I reckon neceſſary in the beginning, and ſuch as will beget facility and eaſe, in the future courſe of your Miniſtry.

(6.) Preach conſtantly, indulge not your eaſe, but ſet your ſelf to your work, and reckon upon it as a thing that muſt be done, without unneceſſary intermiſſions; conſtant practice begets habits, and without this the faculty will never be attain'd. If you Preach only now and then, a ſet or ſolemn Sermon, and do not exerciſe in a continued courſe, it will be ſtill

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an hard and difficult task to you: but frequency will render the work eaſie to be perform'd by your ſelf, and what is ſo will be more eaſie to be underſtood by the hearers.

I Have thus given you my Idea of Preaching. If you now ask me what Entertainment Sermons of this ſort uſe to have, It is here as in the caſe of Books, *ad captum Lectoris* — I obſerv'd to you in the beginning, that the hearers are of extreamly different ſorts, capacities, and expectations: They come to hear for different ends, and ſo are pleaſed, or otherwiſe, as they are gratified, or diſappointed. Some to be entertain'd

tain'd by fine language, and witty ſentences; having no deſign of being inſtructed in any of the Doctrines or Duties of Religion; they have no buſineſs for that knowledge: They come to Sermons with the ſame appetites and inclinations, as they go to ſee, and hear Plays; ſuch will by no means like your Preaching in this way, it hath nothing in it to their purpoſe; and the hearing things ſo little ſutable as principles of Spiritual knowledge, and inforcements of Religious practice, is tedious to them; ſo that if they cannot ſleep, they will talk away the time: An hour ſo ſpent is intolerable; You are never like to have reputation for a

Preacher

Preacher among ſuch. Another ſort of hearers are very contrary to theſe; they have a great zeal for Religion, but then their heads are full of falſe images, and phantaſtick principles: they love to have every thing in the phraſes to which they have been accuſtomed, and according to the phancies they have entertain'd; ſo that your plainneſs, and ſimplicity of ſpeaking will not edifie with them; it wants the life and power, and ſpirituality of Preaching; that is, it hath no vain unintelligible notions, no odd figures, or words without ſence: and theſe are ſo given up to the admiration of the Teachers of their own Genius, that you can expect nothing

thing but to be contemn'd by them as a Preacher of a low dispensation, and one that is unacquainted with the spiritualities, and mysteries of the Gospel. Yea, which you will think very strange, 'tis odds but that they accuse your plainness as unintelligible, and pretend they cannot understand you, because you speak sense in genuine, proper words, without fooliſh affectations, or phantastick Notions. Thus I know it happens sometimes to the cleareſt Preachers, who make Plainness their measure, and design, and who have a great faculty in rendring things easie, and intelligible; whereas those that cant in words without

sence

ſence (which neither the ſpeakers themſelves underſtand, nor any wiſe man can) are taken by thoſe People for the only plain Preachers. The reaſon of which is this, they have been uſed to a ſet of words and phraſes, which they continually talk, and frequently hear, and therefore though they never had any diſtinct meaning convey'd to their minds by them, yet uſe having made them familiar, they doubt not, but that they fully comprehend the ſence of them, whereas being not uſed to ſound matter and plain ſpeaking, theſe are looked on as ſtrange and hard things, which their prejudice and their dulneſs cannot eaſily admit.

Now

Now theſe two ſorts make up the greateſt part of thoſe that lead the vulgar judgments, and under the condemnation of their ſentence you muſt fall. So that it is not very often in this Age, that the true plain Preaching is popular, you muſt be content to hear affected Triflers, and Ignorant Canters applauded as the Rare men, the excellent Preachers, to which all others muſt give place: while the ſubſtantial, and truly learned ones are either diſliked, or but indifferently eſteem'd. It doth I confeſs require much patience to hear folly, and non-ſence applauded, without contradicting thoſe perverſe judgments: but in our circum-

circumstances this often must be quietly born. 'Twill I hope be enough to you, as it is to all good men; that the wise and truly religious judge of these things as they are. And whatever the opinion of vain and ignorant persons may be of the Preaching I have described, it will (I hope) if performed in sincerity, have the approbation of God, and the acceptance, and acknowledgments of all Pious and good men; and all the world first or last, will be of their mind.

I have thus offer'd you a scheme of my thoughts about this part of your work: you see it is like to be very difficult and laborious; but the rewards of

of a faithful diſcharge of this duty (in the other world) are infinite: Upon theſe you muſt fix your thoughts, and from theſe draw your incouragements: But from the preſent expect but little. You are entring I underſtand, upon a charge in a great Town: You will be ſure there to have *buſineſs* enough, and *encouragements* you will have, if you can be ſatisfied (as you ought to endeavour) with the pleaſure of doing well; but if you look for ingenuity, acknowledgments of your labours, worldly advantages, or as much as your juſt rights, you will find your ſelf miſtaken. As to this laſt particular I had an occaſion, not long

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ſince to repreſent the *preſent ſtate* of Miniſters, in *Corporations* and *great Towns*, in a Letter to a Member of Parliament. I may perhaps deliver you from the trouble of ſome ſurpriſe, and diſappointment, by ſending you that account, which therefore I here do.

SIR,

IN obedience to your Commands, I have ſent you a brief account of the ſtate of the preſent Clergy in Corporations, *as far as I underſtand it; and I have had competent knowledge and experience in this matter. 'Tis an affair of weighty, and ſad conſideration, and would require a greater fulneſs of diſcourſe; but I know to whom I write, and therefore give you but the ſhort hints.*

The maintenance of Miniſters in great Towns is either by the voluntary Subſcriptions *of the Pariſhioners, or by* Stated Dues; *which are either* Old Rates

Rates *on the Houſes, or* Small Tythes *and* Offerings.

The maintenance by Voluntary Subſcriptions *is very precarious and uncertain: little or none comes from the profeſt Diſſenters: and among others 'tis ſubject to be withdrawn upon every pet, or diſpleaſure, taken either from a cloſe reproof, or an ungrateful Doctrine: and what a life ſuch a dependence on the humors of the People in ſuch an Age as this is, and what the conſequences of it are, is very eaſie to be underſtood.*

The ſtated dues by Old Rates *on Houſes are very ſmall, holding no proportion with the value; or with thoſe ſet by Act of Parliament on the Houſes in* London: *They are difficult, and troubleſome to be collected, and among the poor, and meaner ſort, which in all Towns are a conſiderable number, they are loſt; for the Miniſter cannot either in Charity or with Credit, make it a buſineſs to contend with them for things ſmall in particulars, though great to him in groſs. The Houſes of* New *Erection, are*

commonly unrated, and pay nothing.

The Small Tithes, *which are the chief maintenance belonging to some Towns, are reduced to very little: the Dissenters, many, if not most of them, absolutely refuse payment: The rest, for the major part, are not brought to reckon for those dues, without great trouble, and long waiting; when they do account, 'tis (for the most) very deceitfully and falsly, concealing what stock they keep, or baffling the Ministers with twenty studied pretensions and evasions; which are very hard for him to disprove, unless he should make it his whole business to look after them.*

Offerings, *which in great Towns were heretofore considerable, are now scarce any thing; for generally not one in five will own any such due; so that the Minister must dispute when ever he claims his right, and commonly without effect, on men, who are stiff by* Will *and not by* Conscience: *Those that do acknowledg it, pay uncertainly, if at all.*

The present ways of recovery of these dues

dues are chargeable, and ſcarce effectual at laſt. The Refuſers uſually will not appear when cited to Biſhops Courts, and to run them up to Excommunication, *when the debt they are cited for is very ſmall, in particulars, looks odiouſly on the Miniſters part. And if they are Excommunicated they will ſtand ſo, without taking notice of it, except they are proſecuted to the Writ* de Excommunicato Capiendo, *which is chargeable to the proſecutor, and ſounds harſhly: and when they are taken up, many of them will lie by it, and ſo all the charge and trouble is loſt: and the Miniſter gets nothing but the name of a Perſecutor after all.*

The way by Treble Damage *will not quit coſt for ſmall dues. The way by the* Exchequer *comes to Gaol too at laſt; and if the Priſoner be not willing to pay, or lie in cloſe durance, he fees the Gaol-keeper, and goes in and out as he pleaſeth.*

So that generally, the livings in Corporations are fallen from what they were before our unhappy troubles a third part

at leaſt, in their value. But the work, and difficulties are as much increaſt; Preaching twice every Lords day is every where expected, and not omitted without great offence, and advantage given to Diſſenters. More private diligence is needed, for the convincing Gain-ſayers, and diſabuſing the miſ-led; for the confirming the weak, and ſetling the wavering; which is above half our work, added by the malignant temper of the Age, and as neceſſary as any of the enjoyn'd offices.

Whether ſuch maintenance, and ſuch circumſtances of livelihood, be ſufficient encouragement for men who have ſpent their whole time, their money, and their pains, to fit them for the publick ſervice of the Church, whether I ſay theſe be encouraging invitations for ſuch to leave their quiet habitations in the Univerſity, and to put themſelves into troubleſome and uneaſie buſineſs; whether ſuch maintenance be ſufficient to enable them to relieve the Poor, who will be ſure to call at their doors, to keep Hoſpitality, and to provide

provide for their Families; to pay taxes and payments, First Fruits, Tenths, Procurations, Paſchal Rents, Poor Rates, Tithing Rates, *&c. In which they are ſure to pay the utmoſt; to enable them to repair and keep in tolerable condition their old, and ruin'd Houſes, and to maintain a* Reader *or Aſſiſtant, which is neceſſary in great places to perform ſome offices, which the Miniſter himſelf may not be able always to attend. Theſe things I hope the wiſdom and juſtice of the Parliament will in due time conſider, and take ſome care for the improving this ſmall maintenance, either after the pattern of what they have done for* London, *or otherwiſe; and ſo to order matters, as that they may receive their dues without ſo much trouble and vexation, of which they ſhall be ſure to have enough, in the duties of their reſpective places. By this courſe I am perſuaded the Credit and ſafety of the* Proteſtant Religion *may be promoted, the bleſſing of God obtain'd, and our other intereſts better eſtabliſh't.*

THis is the brief of the caſe, of which in ſome particulars of it, I doubt you will have large experience; therefore arm your ſelf with Courage and Patience, and reſolve to do your duty however you are treated: This will be ſure to meet rewards elſewhere, whatever entertainment it finds here; and upon the hopes of theſe, we muſt endeavour to live (as we moſt comfortably may) till we arrive at the World of juſt retribution. And I pray God by his Grace conduct us thither. I am

Your Affectionate Friend.

ERRATA.

PAge 7. line 15. for *Sermons* read *Sermon.* p. 29. l. 16. for *i. e.* read 1. p. 37. l. 10. 11. for *enforce.* 3. read *enforte.* 3. p. 58. l. 14. for *turned* read *tuned.* p. 66. l. 17. for *Deformity* read *Diſformity.* p. 69. l. 6. for juggles read jingles.